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British Campaign for the Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia

MEMO

2 April, 1985

Gordon D. McIntosh,
Senator for Western Australia,
Commonwealth Parliament Offices,
City Centre Tower, 44 St. George's Terrace,
Perth, W.A. 6000

Dear Gordon,

Thank you very much for sending me copies of your correspondence with Mr Perez de Cuellar and Mr Rafeeuddin Achmed. I have also seen a similar correspondence between these same UN officials and Lord Avebury.

I find it difficult to see anything in Mr Achmed's letter to you or to Lord Avebury indicating that he considers consultation with the Timorese, including Fretilin, to be an issue of consequence. Regarding the discussion between Mr Perez de Cuellar's senior aide, Paul Cavanagh, and NGO representatives when the UN Se cretary-General was in Melbourne, the only comment I have from Pat Walsh is that "he told us zilch".

All the evidence regarding Mr Achmed's activities as special assistant for the East Timor consultations indicates that he is working quite consistently in Indonesia's favour. The UN Secretariat Working Paper to the Decolonisation Committee on East Timor, submitted at the 1984 General Assembly, which was prepared on Mr Achmed's responsibility, represented little more than a rehash of Indonesian propaganda without even taking the necessary precaution, as previous UN documents did, to source the information as coming from the authority in illegal occupation of the territory.

I very much agree that we must press for the Timorese to be involved in the negotiations over the future of their country. This is the focus of Lord Avebury's Declaration now circulating for support from parliamentarians, The alarming thing is that in many official circles, the line is that every thing must be left to the UN Secretary-General and his special assistant. Sir Geoffrey Howe, the British Foreign Secretary, said in a recent letter that "the issue of East Timor can in our view only be resolved by direct contact between Portugal and Indonesia. We have welcomed the efforts by the UN Secretary General to promote contacts between these two countries and further the prospects for a just settlement in accordance with the wishes and interest of the local people". A similar line is now taken by the Dutch Labour Party. The Party's MP responsible for Indonesian affairs, Mr H, Knol, recently said in a letter to Lord Avebury that he would not sign the Declaration because "as we see it, the only possibility at this moment to change anything is some kind of result from the consultations which are taking place under the auspices of the UN Secretary General" and that "he has the best chance of success".

In West Germany, the human rights coordinator of the SDP, Hans-Ulrich Klose, who visited East Timor recently, has expressed the opinion that although the Indonesian invasion is a clear violation of international law, the fact that the US, the UK and Australia have condoned the invasion lest E Timor become "another Cuba" and that that the UN has shown diminishing interest in the question, means that he does not believe that Indonesia can be persuaded to give up the territory.

Such attitudes of resignation can only help Mr Achmed in his determination to

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guide developments in Indonesia's favour.

As for the UN-sponsored consultations, Indonesia's strategy is to undercut any negotiating demand made by the Portugal (not that these further Timorese interests anyway) so as to be able to dictate the terms of any deal or make it impossible for any deal to be struck. Take for instance, Portugal's demand, presented at the first round of talks last November, that Timorese still holding Portuguese citizenship who worked for the Portuguese colonial administration prior to 1975 should be allowed to repatriate to Portugal. Jakarta's response has been to make such an attractive offer to all these ex colonial civil servants that none of them is likely to want to "repatriate". Under a recent presidential regulation every single former employee of the Portuguese administration, civil servants as well as military and police officers and men, has been offered pegawai negeri (government official) status and will be given the same status and pay as they held in Portuguese times. By mid march, 3443 ex officials had applied, swelling government personnel to 10,000, far more proportionately than the personnel in any Indonesian province. A few years ago, Carrascalao was complaining bitterly that a staff of 4,000 was far in excess of needs, but now he welcomes this new move as "an impressive gift" from the central government. (Sinar Harapan, 27 March, 1985) Under this new disposition, a former chefe de posto will apparently be entitled to earn about Rp. 100,000 a month, and is unlikely to have to do anything in return in the way of a serious job of work.

The UN-sponsored negotiations need to be monitored and watched, but they are nothing more than a side-show as long as the Timorese are not represented. In the developing diplomatic manoeuvres, developments inside East Timor, where resistance still continues and repression is as brutal as ever, need to have the main focus. To support this, TAPOL has produced a Supplement on East Timor, a copy of which I enclose, which is being distributed with our March 1985 Bulletin.

My own feeling is that more pressure from parliamentarians, along the lines you have already been trying to exert, is needed, to show de Cuellar and Achmed that their efforts are widely challenged. Copies of Lord Avebury's Declaration have been sent to a large number of Australian MPs. We hope that many will send their signatures soon, and besides that, MPs could be encouraged to pester the UN officials along the lines of your and Lord Avebury's letters. It is not going to be easy to counteract Indonesia's current barrage of propaganda about 'progress' in East Timor and their claim that resistance is almost finished. But we here in TAPOL feel that this is where the battle-lines are drawn.

I have written this in the form of a Memo so as to be able to circulate it to activist groups in other countries. I also enclose copies of Lord Avebury's correspondence with de Cuellar and Achmed.

Finally, on the points highlighted from my article in TAPOL Bulletin 67, the first two points are based on press clippings, mostly, as I recollect, from the Australian press. I will search them out and send them separately, The point about President Eanes denying recognition to Fretilin is based on his refusal to meet formally with Fretilin representatives on the grounds that the UN does not recognise Fretilin as a liberation movement. Both Abilio and Horta have been unable to fix appointments with Eanes because of this. Maybe you could get more on this from Abilio who, I believe, is currently in Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Carmel Budiardjo.

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